



CONTENTS

What Is Vision?	
<i>by Robert Perry</i>	1
Circle Mailbox	7
Circle News	12



# A BETTER WAY

## What Is Vision?

### Getting a Handle on This Key Concept through Actual Examples

by Robert Perry

The Course tells us that its goal is true perception, which it also calls Christ’s vision, or usually just vision. All our learning, all our study and practice, all our

forgiveness, all our giving of miracles, is meant to bring us to the point where we see with this vision. When that happens, we are told, God will lift us into eternal knowledge, and our journey through space and time will be over, once and for all.

But what is vision? To pursue a goal, we need to have some idea of what it is. If someone tells you that you must devote all your efforts to reaching “zylopterax” (a word I just made up), how would you go about doing that? I think for most Course students, the word “vision” is a bit like “zylopterax.” We tend to have very fuzzy ideas of what that means, which makes pursuing it somewhat problematic. Further, we just don’t talk about it very much. Vision is a major term in the Course. Yet is it a major term in our speech about the Course?

What is vision? I have written overviews of the concept elsewhere (see Chapter 15 in *Return to the Heart of God* and Chapter 5 in *Path of Light*), but the basic idea is fairly simple. Vision is seen not with our physical eyes but with what the Course’s author at first called the spiritual eye and later the eyes of Christ. These are *spiritual* eyes that look on a *spiritual* reality, one that pervades this world but generally goes unseen. Vision sees a light the body’s eyes cannot see. It sees the light of holiness, the “spark of beauty,” in everyone and everything. In short, wherever it looks it sees divine light. Gazing on this light, the Course says, is the happiest experience we can have in this world: “Nothing that you remember that made your heart sing with joy has ever brought you even a little part of the happiness this sight will bring you” (T-17.II.1:5).

However, when it comes to having a clear concept of vision, and one that genuinely motivates us, Course theory is not going to be as effective as actual examples. So that is what this article is about, examples of seeing with vision.

### Beverly Brodsky

My first example comes from [Beverly Brodsky](#). In 1970, following a motorcycle accident in which her skull was fractured in several places, she had a near-death experience (NDE), which NDE author and researcher Kenneth Ring has called “possibly the most moving [NDE] in my entire collection.” This experience culminated in a profound mystical union with God:

Here, I experienced, in ineffable magnificence, communion with the light being....I was God’s object of adoration; and from his/our love I drew life and joy beyond imagining. My being was transformed; my delusions, sins, and guilt were forgiven and purged without asking; and now I was love, primal being, and bliss. And, in some sense, I remain there, for Eternity. Such a union cannot be broken. It always was, is, and shall be.

## PUBLISHED BY

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Bookstore: [www.circlepublishing.org](http://www.circlepublishing.org)

## SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

*A Better Way* is published monthly by e-mail. If you wish to subscribe, please visit our website.

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is a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation dedicated to *A Course in Miracles*. It was founded in 1993. Its publishing division, Circle Publishing, was founded in 2003.

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## WHAT IT IS AND WHAT IT SAYS

*A Course in Miracles* is a spiritual path. Its purpose is to train us to work miracles—to accept and extend to others the shifts in perception that awaken us to God. It consists of three volumes, which signify the three aspects of its program:

- ◆ Text : Through studying the teaching, the Course's thought system first enters our minds.
- ◆ Workbook for Students: Through doing the practice, the Course's thought system penetrates more and more deeply into our minds.
- ◆ Manual for Teachers: Through extending our healed perception to others, the Course's thought system receives its final reinforcement and becomes the only thing in our minds.

The Course's message is that the source of our suffering is not the world's mistreatment of us, but rather our egocentric attack on the world. This attack convinces us that we have defiled our nature beyond repair, that we are irredeemably guilty. Yet the Course says true reality cannot be defiled; it is a realm of pure, changeless, unified spirit. This realization allows us to forgive the world's apparent mistreatment of us by recognizing that it did not actually occur. And as we see this forgiveness come forth from us—see that we are capable of something genuinely loving and egoless—we gradually realize that we never defiled ourselves. Thus we awaken to the untouched innocence of our true nature.

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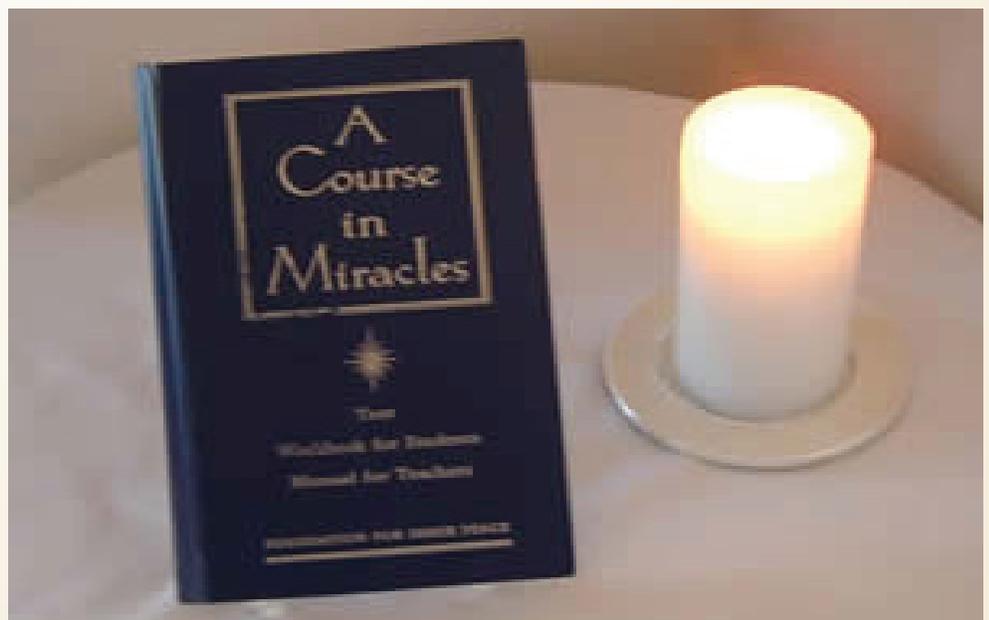
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In Course terms this would be an experience of knowledge—it is beyond what the Course calls vision. However, just as the Course says that the experience of knowledge “leaves a vision in our eyes which we can offer everyone” (W-pI.157.6:3), so for Beverly the aftereffect of this knowledge was a period of six months in which she saw with vision. She says,

After I had my NDE, I had a magical period of about six months where I saw things as they truly are. As Blake said, I saw the seed of love and light all around me, in everything. There was nowhere I could look that didn't contain the essence of this Being or this energy or this consciousness—however you choose to phrase it—that [I experienced] in the infinite space....I saw this in everything and everyone and everywhere. It was in every grain of sand on the beach, in every molecule in the infinite sky.

When I saw Beverly tell this story in a [video online](#), it struck me as such a great example of Christ's vision that I wrote her and asked if she would expand on her description. She very kindly consented and wrote the following:

After my NDE from a fractured skull in a motorcycle accident, for the next six months, I remained in a state of bliss, oblivious to any pain. I saw wondrous meanings everywhere; everything was alive and full of energy and intelligence. The light and love filled every object, whether natural or man-made. I loved everybody and everything. I saw the unity and interconnectedness of all life. I saw the radiance that I experienced in my NDE in every molecule, object, and life form. Plants, stones and animals had an awareness of this connection and their inner spark of life. Even objects, like paintings and buildings, had a spark that was conveyed to them by their human creators. Only human beings were blind to this spiritual truth. I could see their thoughts, feel their feelings, and see how they veiled their divinity, muddled over with false ideas about what is important. We truly have it backwards. We are supposed to honor others, come from love, see it magnified in all of our dealings. Instead, we make people and nature into objects to be used, to glorify our egos. We buy things we don't really want, because we are told to by our culture; with money we don't really have – on credit or credit cards; to impress people we don't really care about, but rather compete against them, having the more “stuff” so that we win this crazy game. We forget that we were sent here to live, learn our lessons, and grow in compassion.

Even though this “magical period” was temporary, it left a permanent mark on her, she says:

Although in time this precious gift faded, I understand now that that's all that exists. In our fundamental nature, we *are* love and we are each loved and forgiven in each moment. I saw that the holy light glowed in people's hearts.

Now Beverly is not a Course student. She told me she had tried to read the Course, “but was put off by its Biblical language.” Yet what she had was clearly an experience of what the Course calls vision. As she says, she saw in all things the essence of the Being she had united with in eternity. She saw that “the holy light glowed in people's hearts.” She saw that the “fundamental nature” of everything is love. She described this seeing to me as an “inner knowing” (which is how the Course characterizes it), but said that it had a visual component, too: “I did actually visually see the light, and auras, and people's thoughts. So it was both an inner knowing and something visual.” And actually, the Course does talk about the invisible light appearing symbolically in visual form, as “little edges of light around the same familiar objects which you see now” (W-pI.15.2:2).

### **Helen's subway experience**

By focusing on Beverly's experience, I don't want to imply that this kind of seeing is so rare that there are hardly any examples. In fact, I think examples abound. They are generally more fleeting; they last an instant rather than six months. But what is experienced has the same essential characteristics. The experiencer sees the divine in the world, especially in other people.

We have a great example of vision straight out of the story of the Course. In Helen's subway experience (which can be found in Ken Wapnick's *Absence from Felicity*, pp. 52-55), which happened decades before the Course, she found herself on the subway, feeling revulsion at the sad display of humanity around her. She wrote, “Besides being dangerous, the whole situation was thoroughly revolting to me. The train smelled of garlic and peanuts, and the people crowded in with us looked dirty and shabby.” Then she said, “I was finding the whole situation increasingly disgusting, and closed my eyes to shut it out, feeling sick to my stomach.”

She was then unexpectedly catapulted into a profound spiritual experience (which, incidentally, contained elements clearly reminiscent of a near-death experience). She saw herself as a child walking into the light of God, bowing before Him, resting her head against an unseen knee, being embraced by a great arm, and finally disappearing into His light. Then, she reported, “The light grew even brighter, and I felt the most indescribably intense love streaming from the light to me. It was so powerful that I literally gasped and opened my eyes.” So now she was face to face with the very scene she had shut out before, only now this scene had been transfigured:

I saw the light an instant longer, during which I loved everyone on the train with that same incredible intensity. Everyone there was unbelievably beautiful and incredibly dear. Then the light faded and the old picture of dirt and ugliness returned. The contrast was truly shocking. It took me several minutes to regain a semblance of composure.

This last part is what interests me here, for this was her experience of vision (her inner vision of the child and God is not really what the Course means by “vision”). The same light that had radiated from God Helen now saw on the subway train, causing her to love with “incredible intensity” the same people she had been disgusted with before. *That* is vision.

### **Examples from the Circle Course Community**

Such experiences, of course, are not limited to people who have near-death experiences or who channel contemporary scriptures. In our online community, the Circle Course Community, in response to a post of mine about seeing the light in others, several members shared experiences of vision. First, Chris Crescenzi shared this experience:

It reminds me of a time when I was very disappointed at the very drunk condition of a homeless friend of mine. I was sure, very sure, he was just awful for destroying himself. I was quite self-righteous in my view even though I had done the same thing with my illness...just as destructive but less socially stigmatizing.

All of a sudden, really something came over me, time seemed to change—it slowed down and at the same time, what I saw changed. Along the contour edge of his body, there were some glistening sparkling things. They looked like star points rather than fireflies, the way they twinkled rather than flashed. This happened at dusk and the man’s body seemed darker than it should have been, possibly because of the twinkling lights. His body was more like the night sky with a faint image of the body still surviving underneath, surrounded by these lights.

This sight stopped condemning words at the tip of my tongue, right at the precipice. Really, struck dumb... my judgments silenced. In place of my disappointment and disrespect, I now felt reverence. I felt as if I should kneel at his feet.

Imagine being this wonderful blessed being caught in an act, a melodrama about being an unhappy drunk on earth...folks judging him right, left...

Seeing him in this twinkling light, this altered shift in time...it was like seeing a new planet in an area of space that my telescope had honed on forever but couldn’t see what was there.

In response to this, Ron Zeiler chimed in:

I had somewhat of a similar experience a few weeks ago. I passed a disheveled, dirty, street person who, I believe, had been drinking or was drunk. I wanted to see him differently and so, quite mechanically because I really didn’t think it would happen, I thought, “Give me your blessing, holy Son of God,” and was shocked to find myself bursting into tears because of his overwhelming beauty that I suddenly became aware of beyond his appearance. I was totally unprepared for this but found that somehow, despite the mechanical nature of my prayer and my doubts, I was blessed beyond anything I could have anticipated. Looking back on it, I must say that I am still amazed that I was shown what I hoped for, prayed for, but had little expectation of receiving. It convinced me that we are heard, and helped, even if we can muster only a little belief that we can see things differently. It reminds me of when Jesus spoke of “a little willingness.” It certainly made me sit up and take notice.

Finally, we heard this from Liz Teska:

I love hearing about these experiences. I’ve been wondering if anyone else has things like this going on.

Mine come in waves. The last wave was 3 years ago. It started when I was in a grocery store. I was looking at the items on the shelf and a woman walked past. I was shocked by her beauty. Very intense. At first I thought it was just her. But then the next person I saw was also stunningly beautiful to me. Then I felt the waves of love wash over us. Then I look around the corner of the aisle and it's not just these two people—it's *everyone*. I'm awed by this, but they are all pretending not to notice. Very interesting that.

The “beautiful people” experiences probably came and went for 6 months or so. I have to admit that toward the end I once stayed in a K-Mart for 3 hours just soaking it all in. I'm weird like that though.

I didn't try to do it. It seemed like a veil fell for awhile. It happens infrequently now but...I look forward to having it be the norm.

As you can see, the experiences all take different forms, but they do have certain core characteristics they share. The person suddenly sees something of the light, something of God, in others. The word “beauty” crops up repeatedly, in phrases like “unbelievably beautiful” (Helen), “overwhelming beauty” (Ron), and “stunningly beautiful” (Liz). This beauty is clearly not a physical beauty, but, you might say, a soul beauty, a beauty of the spirit. And this beauty gives rise to *love*. Helen said, “I loved everyone on the train with that same incredible intensity.” Liz said, “I felt the waves of love wash over us.” Beverly said, “I loved everybody and everything.”

These experiences are clearly what the Course is talking about when it says, “Vision will come to you at first in glimpses, but they will be enough to show you what is given you who see your brother sinless” (T-20.VIII.1:1). To use the language of *The Song of Prayer*, these people are reaching the Christ “in lovely flashes” (S-3.II.2:3).

I am struck by the repeated references to beauty. The Course, too, associates vision with beauty, as we can see in these evocative passages:

Can you imagine how beautiful those you forgive will look to you? In no fantasy have you ever seen anything so lovely. Nothing you see here, sleeping or waking, comes near to such loveliness. (T-17.II.1:1-3)

All this beauty will rise to bless your sight as you look upon the world with forgiving eyes....The smallest leaf becomes a thing of wonder, and a blade of grass a sign of God's perfection. (T-17.II.6:1, 3)

These passages read almost as if the Course is looking over the shoulder of the people whose stories we saw above.

## **Extrovertive mysticism**

As you can see, experiences of vision are not rare. They are, in fact, so universal that they are actually part of the phenomenology of religious experience. There is a category of mystical experience called “extrovertive mysticism,” which is contrasted with “introvertive mysticism.” These terms were coined by Walter Stace in his 1960 classic, *Mysticism and Philosophy*. Introvertive mysticism is where the mystic's mind empties of all normal content, which includes all thoughts and all sense perception, and passes into undifferentiated unity with the One. This is what the Course would call *revelation*, an experience of *knowledge*.

*Extrovertive* mysticism, by contrast, involves seeing this same One as a living, holy presence in all things, and a sense that one is seeing into the real nature of things, accompanied by feelings of blessedness, joy, happiness, and peace. This is one of the examples quoted by Stace, from an American he calls N.M.:

The room in which I was standing looked out onto the back yards of a Negro tenement. The buildings were decrepit and ugly, the ground covered with boards, rags, and debris. Suddenly every object in my field of vision took on a curious and intense kind of existence of its own; that is, everything appeared to have an “inside” — to exist as I existed, having inwardness, a kind of individual life, and every object, seen under this aspect, appeared exceedingly beautiful. There was a cat out there, with its head lifted, effortlessly watching a wasp that moved without moving just above its head. Everything was *urgent* with life...which was the same in the cat, the wasp, the broken bottles.... All things seemed to glow with a light that came from within them.

I experienced a complete certainty that at that moment I saw things as they really were, and I was filled with grief at the realization of the real situation of human beings, living continuously in the midst of all this without being aware of it. This thought filled my mind and I wept.... I became aware that whatever it was that had been happening had now ceased to happen. I began to be aware of time again, and the impression

of entering into time was as marked as though I had stepped from air into water, from a rarer into a thicker element. (*Mysticism and Philosophy*, pp. 71-73)

This experience, which Stace frames as a representative case of extrovertive mysticism, is clearly of the same species as our other examples. Like them, it involves a non-ordinary experience of feeling that one is seeing ordinary things and creatures glowing with an inner light, the light of God (the man told Stace, “I had no doubt that I had seen God”). And like them, seeing this light made things appear “exceedingly beautiful.”

This, then, is what the Course calls vision. Just as introvertive mysticism is the same as revelation in the Course, so *extrovertive* mysticism is the same as *vision* in the Course. I think it helps to have that label. It helps to be able to point to something out there that is identical to what the Course is aiming for. The examples I’ve presented have that same value. The more we can point to things out there that we can call vision, the more clear and vivid and real that concept can become to us.

### **A composite experience of vision**

In an attempt to make this concept even clearer, I have woven together a composite experience, formed from the six experiences we have seen here. Most of what you see below consists of direct quotes, though I have added or changed words for the sake of flow. It is remarkable how easily this fell together, how smoothly quotes from one experience would blend with quotes from another. And although this composite experience is necessarily more complete than any of the individual examples (with the possibly exception of Beverly’s), it is surprising how many of the points below are found in two or more of our examples. To heighten the effect of reading this, I encourage you to read it as if you are the one speaking, as if, in other words, it is your experience.

- I was in a decrepit and ugly area, the ground covered with boards, rags, and debris. The people looked dirty and shabby.
- I passed a disheveled, dirty, street person who looked very drunk. I found myself judging him.
- All of a sudden, what I saw changed.
- Time also seemed to change—it slowed down.
- I was now shocked by the homeless man’s overwhelming beauty, a beauty that I suddenly became aware of beyond his outer appearance. He was stunningly beautiful to me. I felt as if I should kneel at his feet.
- Along the contour edge of his body, there were some glistening sparkling things, like star points.
- Then I looked around and it wasn’t just this person—it was *everyone*. Everyone there was unbelievably beautiful and incredibly dear.
- Indeed, *everything* was alive and full of energy and intelligence. Everything appeared to have an “inside” just as I do. Everything was *urgent* with life, which was the same in the boards, the broken bottles, the people. And every object, seen under this aspect, appeared exceedingly beautiful.
- I saw the unity and interconnectedness of all life. Plants, stones, and animals had an awareness of this connection and their inner spark of life.
- All things seemed to glow with a light that came from within them. I saw it in everything and everyone and everywhere. It was in every grain of sand, in every molecule in the infinite sky. And I saw that this holy light glowed in people’s hearts.
- I recognized this radiance as the light of God. There was nowhere I could look that did not contain the essence of this Being. I had no doubt that I was seeing God.
- Then I felt the waves of love wash over us. In that instant I loved everybody and everything with incredible intensity.
- I was in a state of bliss.
- I experienced a complete certainty that at that moment I saw things as they really are. I knew that in our fundamental nature, we *are* love and we are each loved and forgiven in each moment.
- I felt grief at the realization of the real situation of human beings, living continuously in the midst of all this without being aware of it. I could see how they veiled their divinity, muddled over with false ideas about what is important.
- Then the light faded. I began to be aware of time again, and the impression of entering into time was as marked as though I had stepped from air into water, from a rarer into a thicker element.

Could this be what we are journeying toward? Could this be where the Course is leading us? The difference, of course, is that the Course is leading us to a place where the light will never fade.

## Conclusion

Hopefully, we can now approach this concept with greater clarity. When we read the Course talking about vision now, we can put onto that word the words and images from the above examples. When the Workbook asks us to repeat, “Above all else I am determined to see,” we can remember that this is what it means by *seeing*. Now when the Course promises that an ordinary table “has something to show you; something beautiful and clean and of infinite value, full of happiness and hope” (W-pI.28.5:2), we know what it is talking about. Now when the Course says that our goal is true perception, we realize it aims for us all to become *extrovertive mystics*.

And now we can hopefully pursue that goal with more focus and desire. After all, who could help but want the kind of experience we have just read about? In light of the examples we have seen, we can easily believe the Course when it says, “Nothing that you remember that made your heart sing with joy has ever brought you even a little part of the happiness this sight will bring you.” And as the Course assures, all we need do is want vision and it will be given it. “Vision is freely given,” it says, “to those who ask to see” (T-20.VIII.2:10).

\* \* \* \* \*

*I'd love to collect additional experiences of vision. They can help us make the concept even more clear and vivid to ourselves. So if you feel you have had an experience of vision, please send me your story. I will publish the stories I receive in the next issue of A Better Way. If you would like your story to appear anonymously, just let me know.*



E-mail your comments to the author at: [robert@circleofa.org](mailto:robert@circleofa.org)

**Robert Perry.** *He is the author or co-author of over twenty books and booklets, including Path of Light: Stepping into Peace with 'A Course in Miracles'.*

## CIRCLE MAILBOX

*Here is some of the feedback to Robert's article in A Better Way #103, "Who Made the World?"*

Thank you so much for that insightful article. I am new to the Course and have been amazed at the synchronicities that are happening in my life that seem to pull together and answer questions I have pertaining to the new ideas the Course is showing me.

I started the Workbook in January and have been struggling with the statement in Workbook Lesson 184—“Think not you made the world. Illusions, yes! But what is true in earth and Heaven is beyond your naming.” From all of my reading of the Text, my position was also that the world came from us...then reading this sentence in Lesson 184—boom! Head now spinning again! Your article has helped me to understand that lesson and greatly increased my understanding of “Who made the world?” The metaphysics of the Course is extremely tough for me to grasp...but the light seems to get a little brighter and brighter each day (and then it dims and then brightens again!)

— Ellen Frisch

• • •

In response to your article “Who Made the World?": You seem to struggle so. I, being a Course student, do not get hung up on the meaning of every word or phrase. ACIM text says it many ways so that we may get it. How do you explain geometry to a cow? You would keep trying many ways. There are many versions of explanation of God to find. The words of ACIM have helped me on my journey and on no part of my journey do I want to dissect ACIM. Almost sounds like you are still separating. ACIM is what it is. You, as a writer, like words and phrases. I find them a hindrance in expressing how I feel. Even these words don't express the emotion that explodes from my being...

Thanks for sharing your writing. I extend love and peace to you.

— Eileen Sudzina

## DISCUSSION IN THE CIRCLE COURSE COMMUNITY

*We had a very lively discussion of this article in our Circle Course Community. Here are some of the comments:*

I thought it was one of your best pieces, Robert. It helped me come to grips with Text lines like “a blade of grass a sign of God’s perfection.” The analogy of a director and screenwriter was brilliant. Even in this illusion, God is there.

— Robin Frierson

• • •

I got a lot out of this. Thanks for writing it.

I think my struggle with this issue has been a tension between two poles. On the one hand, I would love to affirm the world, since I do experience myself as living here and want to feel that my life here has meaning. But on the other hand, I’ve never been happy with the usual ways people affirm the world. All of those ways have struck me as serious denial of just how dark and hellish life can be here.

This new perspective, though, seems to encompass the best of both worlds. It doesn’t deny the darkness of the world, and at the same time it gives us a way in which we can honestly and wholeheartedly affirm the world. The whole picture strikes me as both practical and beautiful.

This new perspective also seems very much in accord with the perspective of the near-death experiences I’ve been reading about. I’ve read many accounts of NDErs who say both that the world feels like a prison compared to the experience of the Light, and that nonetheless the world is a great classroom in which to learn the lesson of love. That sounds so much like what you’ve presented here.

— Greg Mackie

• • •

I actually think your latest article has fairly huge implications for the developing understanding of the Course student. I’ve noticed the material making frequent reference to this “bright side” of our universe as well, often, and throughout its pages.

The “two makers” referenced in one of the verses is very helpful in sorting all this out. The world of space-time, like our own minds, is a reflection of a mixture of light and dark. How could it honestly be anything else? A thread of divinity is interwoven through the entire tapestry that we find ourselves enmeshed in. Even the very act of forgiveness is a choice to look beyond the darkness and see the Great Rays that lie beyond. We can take this same vision and apply it to the entirety of the physical realm—finally coming to behold the glory that lies, as the Course says, in even a simple “blade of grass.”

Your article is a great corrective for some of the more myopic understandings adopted by careless students of these writings. I see it as opening a door to further and truer understanding of what it means to seek for and find enlightenment in the world in which we find ourselves.

— Michael Little

• • •

For me, the idea that God had a hand in creating the world is just plain bad news. I see how you are compelled to look at it, Robert, and I appreciate your presentation, but it would be very disappointing to my current thinking (and perhaps hope for happiness), if it were so. It seems to present a very muddy picture, horribly reminiscent of the lack of clarity presented by all the unlovingness in the Bible. I am hoping you can help me with my dislike of the idea of God having a hand in making the world.

I have been aware of the quotes about time’s real purpose, and I take them to mean that, since the world is an illusion, only God’s purpose is real: to dispense with our upholding of the illusion. I think I can see all those quotes that way, from the beginning of the Urtext to the end of the text. However, I have never understood the quote about God planning everything that ever happened to us, which does support His authorship in the world, and which I can’t explain away. That is a basis for the line of thinking which you have presented, as I see it. I have never known what to do with that idea, except to think that the so-called law of attraction does seem to be part of the world, and our thoughts bring what we want, ego or holy. As we want God, our thoughts will bring supporting experience.

To me, part of the key out of the prison is God's call, always present in us, despite our adherence to a false identity. In moments of honesty, in our times of reduced fear, we will question our beliefs, because of the longing kept alive by that call, and it could be responsible for love's expression in us, long before we actually decide to embark on waking to God's love.

The key is also the invited work of the Holy Spirit, speaking with us in our minds, and speaking to us from the real identity of our brother. Yes, the world, seen from the mind that realizes it might wake up is a wonderful classroom. That doesn't seem to require God having a hand in making it, but His creation of our nature.

The idea of God, through the Holy Spirit "managing to manipulate" is just not godly. (You obviously didn't mean it that way.) And if He does influence events, where is He in regards to the illusions of overwhelming poverty, cruelty, etc. Where is the way out for so many, overwhelmed by inequity?

I have been mulling this over for some time since reading your article, not having the time to do a real study, and asking for help in letting it in. I see the lack of logic in my position (e.g., if I am so concerned about overwhelming, crushing ego forces, why am I not getting myself in a truly helpful position to remedy them, and instead trying to keep God out of looking responsible, in my mind). So anything you can say to help here will be appreciated.

— Barb Hembling

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Barb, thank you for your very honest thoughts. I think the first thing to reckon with is those passages in the Urtext and Helen's notes. They really do require a more extreme position than your statement of "since the world is an illusion, only God's purpose is real: to dispense with our upholding of the illusion." I can't get around the fact that in the clearest language, they repeatedly say that God made the world of time and space as a classroom of learning. Here are a few of the clearest examples:

- "God created time so that man could use it creatively."
- [Quoting from a poem] "'And God stepped down from Heaven and said: I'm lonely—I'll make Me a world.' The world WAS a way of healing the Separation."
- "God so loved the world that he gave it TO His only begotten Son."

So we first of all have to reckon with those passages. If we take them as authoritative, then we have to make room for some version of God created time, God made the world to heal the separation, and God gave the world to His Son (for learning purposes). I think we need to either face and incorporate what they are saying or argue that they aren't authoritative.

I think the positive value in the view of the world I was putting forth is that the prison we made has also been set up as a classroom. Obviously, anything can be used as a classroom. But there is a reason we spend tax money to set classrooms up well. I recently went into my little girl's new classroom and it has an interactive white board that can connect to the Internet. That has got to be more conducive to learning than writing on a tree trunk.

One result of this world's classroom being set up well is that it contains the interactive white board called *A Course in Miracles*. And you yourself found this white board. And you met your teacher, rather than never meeting, or meeting a con man instead. Those events have been pivotal for your life.

Imagine that you instead lived in a world designed only as a prison. Nothing outside of you was going to cooperate in your awakening. You had only the positive forces in your own mind to help you through, while everything on the outside functioned only to reinforce your imprisonment.

So we need to be, I think, really glad that the Holy Spirit has a hand in all this. But then there's the issue you raised: Why doesn't He do more? My answer to that has always been that He cannot overrule our will. He only has so much permission before He is encroaching on the free choice given us by God. So I think we have to assume He can't do more, but we also have to be glad that He can do what He does. Without that, I think, we'd all be in a profoundly different position.

So does that help? What thoughts does that bring up for you?

— Robert

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Thank you for your great help, Robert. Yes, I have been very blessed in this classroom. For the Course, for my teacher, for you, and all the CCC, and their loving responses, and for the world which is waiting for me to learn to love it, instead of

being horrified by it, and for much more, I AM Blessed. And thankful.

What does it bring up, to consider that God actually had a hand in making the world, which we have been told is illusion, albeit with real characters, real life? The first thing I think of is Sandy, a member of our last Text-in-a-year group in Kamloops, maybe three years ago. Sandy was offended by my thought that the Course didn't see the world as a place where we chose to come and have all these good learning experiences. I said that we came to get away from God. I think that was the largest part of why she eventually left the group. Should I be with her ideas now, maybe I would have been more adept in responding with Help. Maybe I would have said that we thought we came to get away from God, but because He had given the world a new function through the work of Holy Spirit, we truly had come to learn the Atonement...that we All are now, and always have been, Love, safe in the arms of Love. And there we could have joined.

I suspect the issue for me is one of semantics and what seems to me clear logic. I do appreciate the classroom, though for me the benefits of the Course and the Holy Spirit (and thus the classroom) do not require that God had a hand in the making of the world. I think we believed these things before (about the Course and meeting our teacher, which is the richest blessing possible for those who think they are not in Heaven and don't see God everywhere). But logic says that God does not make things that change and God does not make illusion. And I rely heavily and indeed gratefully on logic, not seeing visions or hearing voices. I will try to appreciate the logic of taking these words literally, as God being a co-Maker, rather than simply God using what we made to heal us by giving us One who sees our lunacy clearly and speaks to us in every way possible from within our minds while we believe we are in the world, "where" we cannot possibly be.

Many thanks to you for your love. That is the deeper logic: what It is all about.

— Barb

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Barb, I think your willingness to explore and rethink, yet without casting aside valid convictions, is truly admirable. I personally think that very process is not only foundational for understanding the Course, but to waking up from the dream. I mean, it's all a process of saying, "Maybe I was wrong, but then again, maybe I had something right, too. And all I want is to sort those two things out with complete honesty until I arrive at the truth, the real truth."

In response to what you said, I do think we need to get God, as God, out of it. Like I mentioned in my article, there is basically no Holy Spirit at this point in the Course. Most mentions of Him in these early parts are from the editors mistakenly replacing "spiritual eye" with "Holy Spirit." (I still can't believe they did that.)

But you're right: God doesn't make things that change or are illusory. He doesn't "make" at all. That's why when the Course says "this world has two who made it," the two are you and the Holy Spirit, not you and God. So we shouldn't call God, as God, co-Maker, just because the word "maker" is inappropriate in relation to God.

In terms of why we came here, I think, based on statements in the Course itself, we came here for both reasons—for unholy purposes and for holy purposes. When I got into the Course, I believed we only came here to learn, so I quickly noticed statements that said the opposite. They seemed jarring. But then I also noticed statements that said just what I believed—we came here for holy reasons. I finally decided that the solution was simple: We came here for both reasons. We've divided our mind into levels, and different levels have different reasons for coming.

In terms of the classroom, let's imagine two different scenarios. In one, the classroom was designed from the ground up by someone absolutely determined to keep you from learning, to reinforce all your prejudices and mistaken ideas. So, for instance, the textbooks in this classroom all say that the earth is six thousand years old and that the Holocaust was a myth. *But* you have a voice in your mind that you sometimes can contact and that will tell you the truth. That, as I understand it, is basically what you have believed.

Now imagine a slightly more complex situation. The guy who designed the previous classroom mostly designed this new one. Therefore, most of the textbooks still say the earth is six thousand years old and that the Holocaust never happened. However, with this classroom, that voice in your mind from the previous scenario also had a hand in designing the classroom. So there are textbooks in there that tell the truth and give cogent reasons why those other textbooks are wrong. Also, older students who know the truth have been planted in the class for your learning. Further, that same voice is constantly at work in the events of the class, so that in each event there is a true lesson that is available for you. For instance, you might find a page from one of the true textbooks stuck to the gum on the sole of your shoe. You'll probably throw the page away, but the opportunity is still there to learn, and it's there in every single situation. So sooner or later you will learn. That voice also makes sure that you find yourself alone with one of those older students when

you're ready to learn. And makes sure that you also happen upon one of the true textbooks when you are ready. And of course, all along, just as in your scenario, that voice is speaking to you from within as well. The difference here, of course, is that it is also helping you from in multiple ways without.

So the question is this: In which scenario would you learn faster?

— Robert

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Hi again Robert. Thank you for your faith in my intent to get closer to truth. I have great faith that this is your wish, so I expect questions to be welcomed and useful help forthcoming (as it is). I just reread, again, your article and see your conviction that the Holy Spirit having a bigger role in the world than you previously thought is a good thing, guaranteeing a better classroom for awakening. You don't seem worried about the possibility that these statements in the Course are contradictory, and you are loath to see metaphor, and I am now more open to the your new small change in interpretation than I was before, which is a relief.

Thanks for your help.

— Barb

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When I first read the discussion this morning, I found myself squirming. I was fearful. My thought was, Oh my gosh, God creating this world sounds traditionally Christian. And if the Course is traditional in that sense, what's to say the ego is not just another form of a belief in Satan? (Which I was not raised to believe in.) It felt for a moment as if I were about to lose the one thing in this existence that cements my belief that I and every living thing are safe in the arms of a God that is only and always pure love.

So I went back and read your article. What I came away with was a deeper understanding of the meaning of "both makers," one that is immensely reassuring. I especially love the writer/director metaphor. It makes complete sense to me, as do your following words, "God, through the Holy Spirit, got involved in the world's formation from the moment we chose separation. The Holy Spirit was able to build the Atonement into our space-time belief. He was able to make the real world part of our overall dream...to remake the world we made. As a result, it became a device for facilitating our learning, so that we could ultimately return home. This meant that He assigned it a new purpose and that He was able to influence the forms and events of this world so they would actually serve that purpose."

Also, there was reference in the article somewhere to HS creating a leaf that was, I believe, golden and beautiful, or words to that effect. That gave me great joy. It made me think of certain Course students who can not imagine the beauty of this world—the trees, the ocean, etc.—not being of God.

I am so primed for this information, Robert. Thank you. I can't tell you how much I appreciate the fact that you delve deeply into the Course that your brothers may better understand God's meaning.

— Jo Chandler

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Thank you, Jo. I do think there is a best of both worlds in this view. We know we don't want God to have created such a painful place. But I think we also know that we don't want to be trapped in a nightmare of our own making. We want to relieve God of the responsibility for the horrors of this place while having His help (through the Holy Spirit) fully available, within us and without us.

The leaf comment is from T-17.II. The basic idea there is that the Holy Spirit can inject a spark of beauty into what we made in our insanity. So we made the leaf and then He, in a sense, remade it. I strongly suspect, though, that the beauty is more an inner beauty than a physical beauty, just because that is the usual meaning of "beauty" in the Course. We have this passage about beautiful church buildings: "The emphasis on beautiful structures is a sign of the fear of Atonement, and an unwillingness to reach the altar itself. The real beauty of the temple cannot be seen with the physical eye."

Anyway, the whole beauty of nature thing is an entire discussion unto itself.

— Robert

### **Update on our move to England**

Nicola and I have been in England for almost three months now. We are still settling in—in fact, our possessions arrived from America only a couple of weeks ago. So we are still unpacking those boxes. The weather has been glorious. Everyone says it's one of the best summers they can remember. We often go out for walks in the nearby New Forest. Last weekend we went there and picked a pile of blackberries, which I'm baking in a crumble this evening for dinner (sorry, tea) with Nicola's parents and nieces. We get to see a lot of Nicola's family. We live just a few minutes away from her parents, who are amazing grandparents. Miranda, who turns five soon, loves it here. She had about six weeks in school before the summer break, and she goes back in two more. Her teachers say she integrated immediately and seamlessly. Michael, two and a half, is just now working his way into nursery school. We are in quite a small house by American standards, and with both kids home right now, it's not always easy to work. But we somehow manage. I love my noise-canceling headphones! Other than that, life goes on. I've got my computer to work on, I've got the Course, I've got my family. My older kids are just a Skype call away, and it's easy to keep in touch with other friends and family in America. What else do I need?

In related moving news, Greg left Atlanta on Sunday, the 15th and arrived in Sedona on Tuesday the 17th. He is now living downstairs where my older son used to live and where more recently I used to work. So between him and Amy and Veronica, we have quite a thriving Course household going at Circle HQ!